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UNCLAS KUWAIT 002335

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI

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SUBJECT: AL-ARABIYA REPORTER ACQUITTED OF HARMING NATIONAL INTEREST

1. (U) A criminal court acquitted Kuwaiti correspondent Adel Eidan on May 21 of charges he had harmed the national interest. Eidan, a reporter for the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya satellite television network, was detained on January 4 and charged with "spreading false news that harmed national interests" after the network aired reports, later retracted, of an alleged gunfight between Islamic radicals and security forces.

2. (U) Eidan, who had been free on bail and working since January 8, told Agence France Press (AFP) on May 28 that he felt "the court has treated me fairly and cleared my name and credibility as a journalist." Eidan's four day January detention had provoked dismay and anger from local and international journalists, who protested the move as illegitimate and had called for his release.

LEBARON